

**SciVerse ScienceDirect**

Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 29 (2011) 296 – 299

**Procedia**  
Social and Behavioral Sciences

International Conference on Education and Educational Psychology (ICEEPSY 2011)

## Personality Predispositions and Loneliness in Adolescence

Azimeh Salimi<sup>a</sup>, Bahram Jowkar<sup>a</sup> \*<sup>a</sup>*Department of Educational psychology, University of Shiraz, Shiraz, Iran*

---

### Abstract

This study is an attempt to understand the relationship between Blatt's personality predispositions (self-criticism, dependency and efficacy) with loneliness in late adolescence. Participants were 426(204 boys and 222 girls) adolescents were selected through random cluster sampling from Shiraz high schools, Iran. They completed Depressive Experiences Questionnaire (DEQ) and Short form of Social and Emotional Loneliness Scale (SELSA-S). To examine reliability of measures Cronbach alpha coefficient and to determine the validity, factor analysis method were applied. Results showed that all of personality variables were significant predictors of loneliness: self-criticism was positive but dependency and efficacy were negative predictors of loneliness.

© 2011 Published by Elsevier Ltd. Open access under [CC BY-NC-ND license](#).

Selection and/or peer-review under responsibility of Dr Zafer Bekirogullari.

*Keywords:* Personality, Self-Criticism, Dependency, Efficacy, Loneliness.

---

### 1. Introduction

Loneliness is a common and unlikable experience that occurs when a person's network of social relationships is significantly deficient in either quality or quantity (Perlman & Peplau, 1984). Loneliness is a potent but little understood risk factor that is experienced by all age groups; but it is most prevalent among adolescents.

Adolescence is a period in which loneliness is a common phenomenon. Despite much of the research indicates that loneliness is felt more intensively in adolescence and late adolescence rather than the other developmental stages of life (e.g., Rubenstein and Shaver, 1982; Williams, 1983; Henrich & Gullone, 2006), however, adolescent loneliness has not been widely studied (Seginer and Mahajna, 2004).

In addition, one of the personality models related to depression that Recently have shown is also associated with significant interpersonal problems, such as loneliness [for overviews, see Wiseman, 1997; and Wiseman, Mayseless, & Sharabany, 2006] is Blatt's social (1990) Model of Personality Development.

---

\* Corresponding author. Tel: +98-711-2245545-50; fax: +98-711-2245443.  
E-mail address: [Hzakeri55@yahoo.com](mailto:Hzakeri55@yahoo.com)

Blatt's (1990) model of personality posits that personality development proceeds through a complex transaction between two fundamental developmental lines: the "self-definition"; and the "interpersonal relatedness". A relative emphasis on either of these lines, defines two depressive personality styles that lastly make person susceptible for "Introjective depression" and "Anaclitic depression", respectively.

Blatt and his colleagues (Blatt, D'Aflitti, & Quinlan, 1976) in order to evaluation these two depressive personality styles, developed Depressive Experiences Questionnaire (DEQ). Factor analysis of the DEQ showed three factors, namely Self-Criticism, Dependency, and Efficacy. self-criticism that refers to Introjective depression, implies a strong emphasis on control, self-definition, autonomy, together with fears of disapproval and loss of control and autonomy; whereas Dependency that refers to Anaclitic depression, implies a strong needs to be loved and taken care of, together with exaggerated fears of loss and abandonment, and a tendency to seek support from others. Efficacy reflects a sense of confidence about one's capacities and resources (Blatt, et al., 1976).

Previous researches have shown that self-criticism to be positively associated with loneliness (e.g., Besser, Flett, & Davis, 2003; Blatt, Schaffer, Bers, & Quinlan, 1992; Enns, 1997; Atger, et al., 2003; Wiseman, 1997) and efficacy to be negatively associated with loneliness (e.g., Wiseman, 1997). The results of previous researches in relation to the association between dependency and loneliness is inconsistent. Most of them showed that the association between dependency and loneliness is positive (e.g., Blatt et al., al., 1992; Enns, 1997; Atger, et al., 2003); and some other indicated that dependency is not associated with loneliness (e.g., Wiseman, 1997; Besser, et, al., 2003).

Since adolescence is a period of high risk for loneliness, this article focused on loneliness as a crucial marker of social relationship deficits and adopted Blatt's model of personality, to study loneliness among Iranian adolescents. Although the role of the Blatt's personality predispositions in the experience of loneliness has been previously investigated (e.g., Wiseman et al, 2006), this is the first to examine in Iranian culture. The purpose of the present study, is to examine the relationship between Blatt's personality factors( self criticism, dependency and efficacy) and loneliness in Iranian adolescents.

## 2. Methods

Participants of this study were 426 (204 boys and 222 girls) adolescents that selected by multi stages cluster random sampling; from different high schools of Shiraz, Iran. Mean age of participants was 17 years.

### 2.1. Measures

#### 2.1.1. Social and Emotional Loneliness Scale for Adults- short form (SELSA-S)

The SELSA-S developed by DiTomasso, Brannen and Best (2004) and adapted to Persian by Jowkar and Salimi (2009). The SELSA-S is a 15-item multidimensional measure of loneliness and comprises three subscales: "Romantic", "Family" and "social" loneliness. "Emotional loneliness", comes out of adding of romantic and family loneliness scores.

The reliability of the measure examined by internal consistency Chronbach alpha method. Alpha coefficient for romantic, family and social loneliness were .83, .77, and .74, respectively. Validity of the measure investigated by factor analysis method. Result of exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis confirmed the validity of measure for use in Iran.

#### 2.1.2. Depressive Experiences Questionnaire (DEQ)

The DEQ developed by Blatt, D'Aflitti, and Quinlan, (1976) and adapted to Persian by Salimi (2008). The DEQ is a 66-items questionnaire designed to assess feelings about the self and interpersonal relations relevant to depression with three subscales: Dependency (D), Self-Criticism (SC), and Efficacy (E). The reliability of the measure examined by internal consistency Chronbach alpha method. Alpha coefficient for D, SC and E were .76, .79 and .74, respectively. Validity of the measures investigated by factor analysis method.

### 3. Results

Concerning the aim of the study, independent t-test analyses was used in order to whether the scores for personality predispositions would vary according to student's gender. Table 1 presents the mean scores of study variables for boy and girls.

Table 1. Comparison of girls and boys participants in study variables

Variable	Girls		Boys		t	P<
	M	SD	M	SD		
Self Criticism	49.04	10.06	47.90	10.16	1.17	N.S
Dependency	60.44	9.77	57.53	9.28	3.15	0.01
Efficacy	45.81	6.75	45.32	6.69	0.76	N.S
Loneliness	37.16	9.42	36.44	9.89	0.77	N.S

As shown in Table 1, girls dependency score (M= 60.44, SD= 9.77) is higher than boy students (M=57.53, SD=9.28). The results showed that there was significant difference between girls and boys in terms of dependency level ( $t= 3.15$ ,  $p<0.01$ ).

To investigate the association between self criticism, dependency, efficacy and loneliness scores of adolescents, Pearson correlation coefficient was computed. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Correlation matrix of Personality Predispositions and Loneliness

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Self Criticism	1			
2. Dependency	0.33**	1		
3. Efficacy	-0.07	0.22**	1	
4. Loneliness	0.30**	-0.17**	-0.22**	1

\*  $p<0.05$

\*\*  $p<0.001$

As shown in Table 2, the results revealed considerable positive correlation between self criticism and loneliness ( $r=0.30$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). There is a significant negative correlation between efficacy and loneliness ( $r= -0.22$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Surprisingly, unlike with previous research, Dependency, was negatively associated with loneliness ( $r= -0.17$ ,  $p<0.001$ ).

### 4. Discussion

In this study, As we would expect, a significant difference between girls and boys has been found out, in dependency. Girls dependency scores (M=60.44) was significantly higher than boys (M=57.53). This finding is consistent with some studies results (e.g., Wiseman, 1997; and Zuroff, Quinlan, & Blatt, 1990). The findings of significant difference in dependency levels in terms of gender may be stem from the differential socialisation of males and females, and their gender roles in the Iranian culture.

The analyses, consistently with previous research (e.g., Besser, et al., 2003; Blatt, et al., 1992; Enns, 1997; Atger, et al., 2003; Wiseman, 1997), have pointed out a meaningful positive correlation between self criticism and loneliness. Person's negative thoughts about themselves, lead to less socializing and will decrease the likelihood of their forming satisfying relationships. These cognitions impact on how they interact, as well as how they interpret interpersonal situations.

Despite previous researches that have shown dependency was not associated with loneliness (Besser et al., 2003; Wiseman, 1997), or associated positively (e.g., Blatt, et al., 1992; Enns, 1997; Atger, et al., 2003); in the present study the correlation between dependency and loneliness was significantly negative. This finding indicates that in collective cultures such as Iran, dependency to others protect person as opposed to loneliness.

Moreover some researchers (e.g., Blatt, Zohar, & Quinlan, 1995; Rude, & Burnha, 1995), in a subsequent factor analytic, investigation extracted two component namely Neediness and Connectedness, from dependency in DEQ. Neediness reflect 'adolescence generalized, undifferentiated dependence on others and feelings of helplessness and fears of desertion and abandonment (Blatt et al., 1995). Another more adaptive component of dependency (i.e.,

connectedness) was assumed to represent ‘a valuing of relationships and a sensitivity to the effects of one’s actions on others’ (Rude & Burnham, 1995). These researches, on the neediness and connectedness factors of dependency, have generally shown that neediness have more closely relation to maladjustment feelings than connectedness.

It seems that, in Iranian collective culture, dependency score, is loades more on the connectedness component; hence more dependency lead to less loneliness.

Another finding of present study was that the association between efficacy and loneliness was negative too. This result is consistent with few previous research (e.g., Wiseman, 1997). Individual's higher efficacy scores indicate a higher sense of confidence about their capacities, that help person to engage in more social relationships and experience less loneliness.

## References

- Atger, F., Frasson, G., Loas, G., Guibourge, S., Corcos, M., Perez Diaz F, Speranza M, Venisse, J. L, Lang, F., Stephan, P., Bizouard, P., Flament, M., Jeammet, P. (2003). Validation study of the Depressive Experience Questionnaire. *Encephale.*, 29(5), 445-455.
- Besser, A., Flett, G.L., & Davis, R.A. (2003). Self-criticism, dependency, silencing the self, and loneliness: A test of a mediational model, *Personality and Individual Differences*, 35 (8), 1735-1752.
- Blatt, S. J. (1990). Representational Structures in Psychopathology. [www.psychomedia.it/rapaport-klein/blatt1-90.htm-138 k].(10/10/2007)
- Blatt, S. J., D’Afflitti, J. P. & Quinlan, D. M. (1976). Experiences of depression in normal young adults. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology.*, 85(4), 383-389.
- Blatt, S. J., Schaffer, C. E., Bers, S. A., & Quinlan, D. M. (1992). Psychometric properties of the Depressive Experiences Questionnaire for Adolescents. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 59(1), 82-98.
- Blatt, S. J., Zohar, A. H., & Quinlan, D. M. (1995). Subscales Within the Dependency Factor of the Depressive Experiences Questionnaire. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 64(2), 319-339.
- Enns, M. W. (1997). Personality Dimensions and Depression: Review and Commentary. *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, 42, 274-284.
- Heinrich, L. M., Gullone, E. (2006). The clinical significance of loneliness: A literature review. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 26(6), 695-718..
- Jowkar, B., & Salimi, A. (2009). Evaluation of the Psychometric Characteristics of the Persian short version of the Social and Emotional Loneliness Scale for Adults. *Persian Journal of Shahed University*, 16(81).
- Perlman, D. & Peplau, L.A. (1984). Loneliness research: survey of empirical findings, in: L.A. Peplau & S.E. Goldston (Eds) Preventing the Harmful Consequences of Severe and Persistent Loneliness(Washington, DC, US Government Printing Office).
- Rubenstein, C.M., & Shaver, P. (1982). The experience of loneliness. In L. A. Peplau ve D. Perlman (Eds.), *Loneliness: A sourcebook of current theory, research and therapy* (p.206-223). New York: Wiley.
- Rude, S. S. & Burnham, B. L. (1995). Connectedness and neediness:factors of the DEQ and SAS dependency scales. *Cognitive Therapy and Research*, 19(3), 323-340.
- Salimi, A. (2008). Causal Model on Antecedents and Concequences of Loneliness. Unpublished master’s thesis, Shiraz University, Institute of Educational Psychology.
- Seginer, R., & Mahajna, S. (2004). How the Future Orientation of Traditional Israeli Palestinian Girls Links Beliefs About Women's Roles and Academic Achievement. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 28,(2), 122-135.
- Williams, E.G. (1983). Adolescent loneliness. *Adolescence*, 18, 51-66.
- Wiseman, H. (1997). interpersonal relatedness and self-definition in the experience of loneliness during the transition to university. *Personal relationships*, 4, 285-299.
- Wiseman, H., Mayseless, O. & Sharabany, R. (2006). Why are they lonely? Perceived quality of early relationships with parents, attachment, personality predispositions and loneliness in first-year university. *Personality and Individual Differences.*, 40(2), 237-248.
- Zuroff, D.C., Quinlan, D.M., & Blatt, S.J. (1990). Psychometric properties of the Depressive Experiences Ouestionnaire in a college population. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 55, 65-72.